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THE RELATIONAL AND ADAPTATIONAL  
PROBLEMS OF MALE HOMOSEXUALS

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### SYNOPSIS

This graduation exercise is a study to investigate if the male homosexuals in our society experience problems due to their sexuality and their adaptation to the situations. Before that, I will attempt to gauge the attitude of the society towards homosexuality to see if it is the societal reactions that gives birth to the male homosexuals' problems.

The problems of the male homosexuals will be seen in selected aspects which are social, economical, political and sexual.

The first chapter opens with the aim, scope and theoretical framework of this research. The methodology and problems experienced during fieldwork will also be included. Chapter two relates the essential understanding of homosexuality and the theoretical factors causing it. An analysis of the societal reactions towards homosexuality will be in the main of chapter three, while chapters four and five is the analysis of the male homosexual respondents' relationships with people in the previously selected aspects. The conclusion is to be found in chapter six.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

THIS chapter opens with a brief background by recalling selected periods of homosexuality through the ages. It is followed by the aims and scope of this research. A theoretical framework preceeds the collection of data with the research methodology and sampling. This is followed by an outline of all the problems experienced while conducting the fieldwork and finally, attention is given to the significance and limitations of this particular research.



## I.I Background

Going through history, it can be found that homosexuality has existed since man toiled the earth. Records of its existence have been found during different periods in time and in various parts of the world through the works of people like writers, poets and travellers. Homosexuality is definitely not a product of modern civilization but has its roots even in the primitive cultures. However, the practice of homosexuality varied in different cultures - from total unacceptance in some to various degrees of societal accommodation in others.

The Greek philosopher, Herodotus, around the 5th century B.C. related about the women dominated island, Lesbos, off the coast of Greece and according to him, it was a kingdom where Sappho, a Greek poetess reigned and where homosexuality among the women was practically a way of life. Love was sought after from members of the same sex while men were necessary only for procreation. Homosexuality among females was noted in the royal harems, where confinement and segregation from men resulted in them turning to one another. Many other kingdoms similar to Lesbos, were prominent in and around India.

Male homosexuality did gain social recognition during a period in Greece. Not only was it accepted, but it was expected that an older man should have a relationship with a younger one if they were to be considered normal and successful Greeks. The homosexual relationship was believed not to be a platonic one.



Neighbouring regions like Spartan and Theban were not without their homosexual influence. In Athens and Rome, homosexuality was unwelcomed and punishable. Homosexuality could be found alluded in several Elizabethan literature, for example, by M. HINSCHFELD (1631) "Sexual Anomalies and Perversions".

By the 17th Century, homosexuality was conceived as a condition in England and was then " firmly established in society ".  
( SHAKUNTALA DEVI, 1977 : 34-35 )

Although similar events have not been recorded in our history, it is unwise to deny its existence altogether as there have been references made to the existence of homosexuality in Asia.

Only in the early twentieth century were scientific studies on homosexuality carried out and the majority of these researches were done in America by renowned people like ALFRED C. KINSEY (1948 and 1953) and JOHN H. GAGNON (1973 and 1967). Not only were sex researchers involved in this task but extensive work was also carried out by, among others, psychiatrists, physicians and priests. Today, homosexuality is more widely and intensely discussed and debated with social, political, religious and psychological overtones. Yet, much too little is known and understood about it, and this is undeniably so in our Malaysian community.

## I.2 Aims and Scope of Study

Although few are aware of it, there really is a pressing and practical need for a better understanding of homosexuality and homosexuals here in Malaysia to help resolve the problems that revolve around it. The problems experienced by homosexuals in their daily interactions are really due to the fact that " a veil of emotion , dogma, ignorance and blind prejudice " ( PLUMMER, 1975 : 4 ) stagnates any possible form of positive development for a better understanding on the part of the public. The gap is widened as homosexuals' problems multiply and public confusion increases.

Consequently, this research basically deals with the problems experienced by male homosexuals in our society. However, I have chosen to throw light specifically on the social, economical, political and sexual aspects of their lives.

I hope not to limit my focus on their problems alone, if there are any at all, but also to state the problems and the factors causing or contributing to them.

There are various aspects of homosexuality that research can be done on and my choice in highlighting their relational and adaptational problems is for very simple reasons. The fact that homosexuality is usually regarded as deviant behaviour, or a mental disorder, homosexuals as human beings with feelings are conveniently overlooked. Research carried out on homosexuality are usually about its causal factors and the possible treatment for it. However, much



too little is channelled on the most important issue in question and that is, the homosexuals themselves. The fact remains that in our society, too little research is being carried out on the topic of homosexuality for many reasons. However, in not wanting it to exist, or even pretending that it does not exist, does little to help our society. For this reason, I feel more researchers from various fields should take an interest in the topic of homosexuality and that this piece of work may be a modest contribution towards a better understanding of it all.

### 1.3 Theoretical Framework

All researches should be guided by broad theoretical perspectives. In the field of sexual deviance, there has been little theorizing from a sociological point of view.

For KENNETH PLUMMER, the most important factor about homosexuality " is the perceived hostility of the societal reactions that surround it. " ( PLUMMER, 1975 : 102 ) He is of the opinion that all else stems from this factor and being a homosexual is " a process that is characterized by problems of access, problems of guilt and problems of identity " which then results in the " interaction problems involved with concealing the discreditable stigma, " on the part of the male homosexuals.

According to Nigel Walker, there are seven stigmatic effects that can be divided into two opposing groups. The first



category is society's reaction towards the deviant actor. Society's initial reaction is " suspicion " ( WALKER, 1980 : 142 ) in that, the deviant actor is more frequently and more likely suspected of wrong-doings. He faces more problems when it comes to the question of " employment " or even in retaining his job. The deviant actor often experiences " ostracism " , in that he loses the support of his family and friends. Sometimes the issue of " martyrdom " arises where support is enlisted in favour of the deviant actor.

The stigmatic effects of deliberate social labelling forces the deviant actor into " self-labelling " which " is more pervasive and more powerful than formal labelling " by his society. The deviant actor is now made to feel that he has a " damaged self-image " and if he rejects the image, he could then prescribe to an " anti-label reaction " by attempting to prove himself. On the other hand, he could cultivate an " anti-labeller reaction " and react against the labellers rather than the label.

In labelling male homosexuals as sexual deviants, society automatically stigmatizes them. This stigmatizing effect is then extended to these male homosexuals who perceive it as hostility within the confines of society. This perceived hostility is felt in most aspects of their lives, with regard to their interaction with the public, therefore making daily life for homosexuals problematic. Following which, are the problems encountered by male homosexuals a social product ?

#### I.4 Collection of Data

##### i. Methodology

In the attempt to acquire the most objective form of data and information, it was necessary to rely on more than just one method of research. Moreover, my collection of data is a compilation of material gathered from two groups, those of,

- A. the male homosexuals
- B. members of the public

For A ; the collection of data from the male homosexuals, two technics of research were used :-

- (a) fieldwork research
- (b) library research

(a) In the fieldwork research, several methods had to be used and these included the observational method, the use of informants and interviews using unstructured-questionnaires.

##### The Observational Method

Before any of the respondents were interviewed, a substantial amount of time was spent in getting to know the male homosexual community in the place intended for the research. This was necessary because then I could learn to identify them, associate with them , experience their way of life, understand them and hopefully, to be accepted not as an intruder in the community.



During this period, which was about four weeks, most of the research carried out was purely by observational method. KARL WEICK defines this method as " the selection, provocation, recording and encoding of that set of behaviours and settings concerning organisms 'in situ' which is consistent with empirical aims . "

( WEICK : 1968 ) In accordance with his definition of selection, it was important to focus this research observation on all that is intentional and unintentional within the male homosexual community. Observational method was chosen because it tells a lot about behavioural patterns and especially since the observation was carried out in its natural settings, any form of pretence was minimal. Observing the male homosexuals before the actual interviews provided several advantages like the ability to understand their private vocabulary, their topics of interest and this helped to overcome difficulties at the initial part of the interviews. While being with the community and observing them, my presence was gradually becoming an accepted fact and this acceptance was later reflected in the open and frank discussions during the interviews.

#### The Use of Informants

This method was used as its main purpose is to provide additional information and this is necessary for this research. The informants were usually male homosexuals themselves and they were either good friends or were well-informed about the history



and life of the other male homosexual respondents. These informants were extremely helpful in providing more information on the sensitive issues of some of the other respondents' like about their backgrounds, or certain issues they were reluctant to discuss during the interviews. While this information may not be directly necessary to the research, it was important to help me understand the respondents better and to see the problems they are experiencing in clear perspectives.

#### The Interviews with Unstructured-questionnaires

In the majority of researches, the bulk of the data is collected through the use of questionnaires, and in this case unstructured-questionnaires were used during the interviews. The unstructured-questionnaires in this research was a list of questions which was previously prepared before the carrying out of the field-work. However, although in general the questions were specific to highlight the proposed aspects, they were unsystematic and versatile in usage.

There are two types of questionnaires, that is, the close-ended and the open-ended. In this research, open-ended questionnaires were preferred because the answers were expected to be very individualistic and opinionated. It enabled the respondents to actually describe their individual experiences, their feelings and their lives without any form of restriction. This type of questionnaire

enabled answers that were very responsive, that is, they could answer them categorically and phrase it in their own vocabulary.

Close-ended questionnaires would have restricted their freedom in answering and this could mean a reluctance in elaborating on any answer as they might feel that it is unnecessary.

There are also two ways in which an interview can be conducted; the structured interview and the unstructured interview. The latter was chosen because the unstructured interview does not have a fixed method of conducting the interview. This does not mean that the questions deviate from the topic of research altogether. However, the questions before the actual interview could be on any topic depending on the discretion of the interviewer. In addition to that, questions to be asked need not necessarily follow a planned order. The discretion of the interviewer is vital in choosing topics which would first build a sense of trust and then cultivate a relaxed atmosphere where a respondent would be willing for a frank and open discussion. The place for the interview to be carried out would be equally informal and this would help the respondent to behave naturally.

Those to be interviewed had to meet certain requirements. Firstly, they either live in Penang, or spend most of their lives there, as the island was chosen as the place for the research. The choice of this place was because the island is a good representative of the varied states existing in Malaysia. It can be said



to be rather undeveloped in certain parts of the state and in certain aspects of the local community, and yet there is an adequate influence of industrialization and modernization. The community could then be assumed to be equally representative. Moreover, it is my hometown and this is an added advantage as the problems that will be dispensed with are, among others, language barriers, knowledge of the town area and making friends with the male homosexuals or informants at the initial period of the research.

Secondly, the respondents had to be within a certain age limit which was previously fixed between 16 - 30 years old. This age limit was chosen because the majority of male homosexuals who have been noticeably unreserved about their sexuality were found to be in this age limit, and so it would be easier to find respondents. In addition to that, not only were those easily identifiable within this age limit that frequent gay bars and other gay spots, but they were also more willing to be interviewed. I coincidentally happen to be within the same age limit and so it was easier to understand, communicate and move with the people of the same generation.

Thirdly, the respondents had to be male homosexuals only. With regard to all homosexuals, male homosexuals were chosen because, statistically and observationally, they out-number the population of female homosexuals, and they are more easily identified. It is observed that female homosexuals are neither so open nor obvious



about their sexuality, and it would be a tedious task to find enough respondents. Compared to female homosexuals, there are more male homosexuals who are definitely more unreserved both physically and mentally about themselves.

Identifying the male homosexuals is not enough, they have also to be willing to admit their sexuality to me for the interview.

Finally twenty respondents were decided upon to be interviewed and they are of the three races found in our society, that is, Chinese, Malays and Indians.

RACE	NO. OF RESPONDENTS			
	SCH.	UNI.	WORK	TOTAL
Chinese	4	4	7	15
Malays	-	1	2	3
Indians	-	1	1	2
Total	4	6	10	20

TABLE I.I

These twenty respondents can be divided to belong to three categories :-

- ( i ) respondents in schools (SCH.)

There are 4 respondents here and found to be between the ages of 17 - 19 years. They come

from lower middle class and upper middle class families both socially and economically.

( ii) respondents in universities (UNI.)

There are 6 respondents here and are between the ages of 22 - 27. Respondents here are found to be from the middle and upper class stratum.

(iii) respondents who are employees (WORK)

There are 10 respondents in this category within the ages of 19 - 27. Here the socio-economic background of the respondents vary widely.

(b) The library research served its purpose in providing material both vital and necessary to the understanding of homosexuality and also to the writing of this exercise. Library research was highly advantageous in that it provided a clear perspective on the older and contemporary theories on homosexuality, on the history of homosexuality, the unending debates on it and several commendable research on various aspects on homosexuality.



For B ; the collection of data from the members of the public refer to four selected groups of people comprising of the male homosexuals' peers, parents, teachers and employers.

The method used was solely structured-questionnaires that were open-ended. The questions that were prepared were asked to all the respondents in a very similar manner. However, it should be noted that some of the questions did vary depending on which group the respondent had belonged to. The interviews were conducted informally, though some were in offices and schools. Respondents were encouraged to express themselves without feeling as if they were condemning. No specific requirements were needed for these respondents except that they should belong to one of the four stated groups, regardless of age, sex and race.

ii. Sampling

A sample can be defined " as a subset or portion of the total population " ( BAILEY, 1978 : 70 ) As it is not possible to study the total population, we have to be satisfied with only a sample that is representative of the total population. There are various ways of selecting samples. In the case of this research for the male homosexual respondents, the purposive sampling from the non-probability sampling category was chosen as it is the only one appropriate to this research.

BAILEY stresses further that , " in purposive or judgemental sampling the investigator does not necessarily have a quota to fill

from within various strata, " neither does " he or she just pick the nearest warm bodies. " This is true for this research because samples were needed specifically from the male homosexual community only and not just any person in the street, but they did not have to belong to any particular strata. In addition to that " the researcher uses his or her own judgment about which respondents to choose, and picks only those who best meet the purpose of the study. " This is exactly what was done because after confirming that a certain number of people are all male homosexuals, only several among them were selected because they met the basic requirements such as age limit, race and also because only a number of twenty respondents were needed. This method of sampling was apt because in being able " to choose respondents ", only those who were prepared to admit their sexuality in the interview, were able to discuss more openly and honestly their lives and experiences. In using purposive sampling, less time and money was wasted from the selection of wrong or uncooperative respondents.

Though one of the most popular and most widely used method of sampling is random sampling from the probability sampling category, it was totally unsuitable for this particular research. In random sampling " each person in the universe has an equal probability of being chosen for the sample. " (BAILEY, 1978 : 75) However this advantage was unnecessary because firstly, samples were not needed from the universe and the opportunity of " equal



probability of being chosen " might result in the sampling of people who are not even homosexuals. This would only multiply problems during the fieldwork and also a waste of more money.

While purposive sampling was the dominant choice, snowball sampling was also used on several occasions. Snowball sampling works on the basis that " a few persons having the requisite characteristics are identified and interviewed " and then " these persons are used as informants to identify others who qualify for inclusion in the sample ", and are later interviewed too. ( BAILEY, 1978 : 75 ) Snowball sampling was used as it was a necessity to be acquainted with as many male homosexuals as possible for the benefit of the purposive sampling. Moreover, it provided more interaction and gave a better insight into the varied lives of the male homosexuals.

In the sampling of the members of the public, the four groups were specifically chosen because they represented the public with which the male homosexuals were assumed to have the maximum interaction. These four groups also represent individuals from about three generations in the society and this would mean that opinions collected are from a broader perspective. The method of sampling that was used was accidental sampling from the non-probability sampling category.

Accidental or convenience sampling occurs when " the investigator merely chooses the closest live person as respondents "

( BAILEY, 1978 ) and this is the main difference from the purposive sampling as can be seen in a contrary quotation earlier. In addition to that, the researcher's judgment for samples are important in the purposive sampling, while no such requirement is needed in the accidental sampling. In this case, respondents are just selected from those at hand and the process is continued until the sample reaches a specific number. For example, the sampling of teachers in a school. Teachers found in the staff room are interviewed at random without having to meet any requirements except for the fact that they are teachers. It would be a waste of time, effort and money to select respondents at random and hope that they fit into one of the four groups.

#### I.5 The Problems Experienced During Fieldwork

Whenever there is fieldwork involved in the collection of data, problems should always be expected. It should be noted that I was also expected to complete the fieldwork in five weeks, as stated in the original work-plan.

However, due to unexpected problems, the time allocated for the fieldwork was extended to about ten weeks. Among the list of problems, the first one is the term used by CAROL WARREN to describe her own experience during her research, and that is " entering the world ". Although I was not unfamiliar with the male homosexual community in the area intended for the study, I was not spared from



this problem. I realized that if a good research was in mind, it was not enough to mingle casually among them. Though time was limited, I was determined to experience their way of life to its permissible extent. I learnt that to do this it was necessary to be associated with the trusted or more influential male homosexuals within the community itself. The problem here was that two whole weeks were used mingling among the peripheral in the community, that is, among male homosexuals who were either too young or insecure in the community to draw me into the core of it all. Finally I succeeded after changing my approach but found that much time and effort had already been wasted. This could have been overcome had specific time been allocated to identify the more influential and prominent male homosexuals within the community before the actual collection of data. This time would enable the getting-to-know the appropriate people in a more relaxed and sociable manner.

During the observational period of about four weeks, no interviews were conducted because it was necessary to observe the male homosexuals' activities in their daily lives and if possible to visit and observe their homes and families. This time spent was not wasted in the least, however, neither was it even allocated for in the work-plan. During planning, the importance of the observational method was underestimated and it was assumed that it could be carried out concurrently with the interviews. To overcome this problem, the importance of each method proposed should be

given consideration and specific time allocated, and not result in the necessary reshuffling of the work-plan, causing delay and much stress.

Even within the male homosexual community, a researcher would experience similar problems as another researcher conducting a study of an Indian community with Brahmins and outcastes. By associating myself with certain factions in the homosexual community, I found several other factions keeping their distance and behaving in a reserved fashion. Any support, and respondents to be observed and later interviewed, only came from those who were on good terms with you. It was difficult to try and befriend those in the so-called rival factions as both sides would finally regard you as a traitor. This limited my choice of respondents and even threatened the number of respondents to fall short of the expected quota. Finally, I did succeed to gain acceptance into a few other groups who did agree to be interviewed. I realise that it would not be possible to overcome this problem by myself but effort could be made to minimize the rather delicate situation. The only possible suggestion is that more time would enable a wider social circle to cultivate friendship with various groups in the community.

The importance of informants was stated earlier. It was necessary to get more than one informant because a single person could not be completely informed about nineteen other people from different groups. The first problem was to get them to agree to



reveal about their friend's life history or about the experiences they know of. Although I was honest with all the informants and respondents about my intention, it did not mean that they were obliged to say anything at all, especially about another person. However, they did eventually speak openly to me after I gained their trust. Much time and personal effort was put in to acquire their friendship and trust. The other problem with the use of informants was that I could not accept anything that they said without double checking the fact first with the other male homosexual respondents. I had also to confirm the reliability of each informant by my own observation and from the opinion of others of them. This was very time consuming and a lot of patience, tact and perception was necessary.

There were some difficulties in getting respondents who are still in secondary schools. Being so many years out of school, there were difficulties in making contact with them. Moreover, they had to come only from the boys' schools, while the majority of my school years were in girls' schools. The plausible way of solving this problem was to have made inquiries about a person or persons in these schools prior to the work programme. Regarding the male homosexual respondents in schools, there was less opportunity to observe them before they were asked to be interviewed and so it was necessary to probe about them to confirm their sexuality. This confirmation had to be sought after from the more reliable

students in the same school and had to be doubly checked. This was not only time consuming and a problem in itself, it also required a lot of tact and discretion as it might discredit some innocent people.

It was not a task to obtain a verbal agreement for an interview with a prospective respondent, however, the problem arose when the respondent decided to cancel the appointment without prior notice or had changed his mind just before the interview. This happened on several occasions and I found myself being stood-up for hours. This problem affects the smooth running of the research and causes a lot of alterations in the daily and weekly work schedule. It also has the effect of dampening one's spirit and confidence. A lot of money and time was wasted on unsuccessful interviews. Not much can be done about these respondents but a positive effort, which is time consuming, would be the fostering of better relationships between the respondents and myself before the actual interviews.

There were several problems with regard to the information collected, in that, respondents were unwilling to reveal their background. During several interviews, I was given monosyllable answers to most of the questions pertaining to the respondents' history and family. They were found to conveniently skip the more sensitive issues. Although their doing so was not without justification, it made the attempt to understand them and their background



extremely difficult, and this could reduce the quality of the research which emphasizes on their problems. This problem could be eased with the help of informants and a personal observation of their interaction at home.

Many respondents were found to be rather cautious and evasive when asked personal questions like those relating to their sexual lives. Some provided answers that were so general that it was applicable to anyone at all. Frequently I found the background knowledge I had, did not coincide with their answers or that it was always evaded. While this could be overcome by discreetly leading the line of questioning and making evasion difficult, the choice still remains with the respondents.

There was also the problem of misinterpretation of questions. When they were asked their own attitude towards homosexuality, some of them assumed that the question was about the cause of their sexuality. Elaboration and explanation was necessary to clarify this misunderstanding and a few others. This is the result of unstructured questions, though it allows much room for elaboration in their answers.

Questions were also misinterpreted and answers deviated in cases where the respondents themselves did not understand the concept of homosexuality. This tend to occur among school boys. To avoid this, the age limit of respondents could be raised but such a problem is unpredictable.

No research is without its problems and this one proves to be of no exception.

#### I.6 Significance and Limitations of this Research

The relational and adaptational problems of male homosexuals, is undeniably only one of the many aspects in the field of sexual deviance. It is not expected that a revolutionary change of attitudes towards homosexuality should result on completion of this exercise. However, there is the hope to successfully bridge the gap of misunderstanding which has long been implanted in our society.

Male homosexuals are continuously stigmatized in our society. This stigmatization results in a perceived hostility on the part of the male homosexuals as deviant actors and this perceived hostility bears an underlying, though existing, effect on their daily interactions with the other members of society. Majority of the male homosexuals here attempt to avoid this problem by concealing their sexual preference.

An important question here is : Are their problems multiplied as a result of this stigmatization of them as sexual deviance ? If so, then ; Is that stigmatization justified ?

The significance of this research on the one hand deals with the problems experienced by male homosexuals, but more important that that, it is hoped that this research may clarify the multi-misconceptions about male homosexuals in our society, thus



creating an awareness for a true and better understanding of them as rightful members of society.

It is hardly possible for any one research to be so extensive that it envelopes every aspect of the topic of research, to the point that it can be said to be flawless and deserving only praise.

This topic of research on male homosexuals is no exception, on the contrary, it has numerous limitations ! This is due to the fact that as a graduation exercise, the maximum time available for fieldwork was only three months. For this particular research, only five weeks were allocated for the fieldwork in the original work-plan, but finally, an extension of another five weeks had to be made. Basically, this narrow time limit hinders the success of an indepth study which is necessary when dealing with human relations.

A research of this manner always deals with only a single aspect in the entire field it is related to. For this particular research, only the problems experienced by male homosexuals are being given emphasis and this can be said to be only a minor aspect. Though it is not unimportant, there are opinions which disagree to this and suggest that other aspects deserve to be highlighted. However, the limiting of this research specifically to their problems would mean an exclusion of the other aspects relating to it.

The fact that this research is carried out in Penang, which is presumably representative of the multi-racial and multi-

cultural constraints of our society, is in itself a limitation because the area of study cannot be said to possess international representation. Very few countries in the world have similar social and cultural conditions that still influence the individual to a great extent. Therefore, it is hardly possible to assume that the conditions met by the male homosexuals in our country are similar to those in the other parts of the world, for example, in America. Although the theoretical definitions may be international, environmental differences remain dissimilar. Any research findings cannot then be proclaimed international.

Homosexuality is accepted in varying degrees, or rejected altogether, depending very much on each society, its culture and way of life. Stemming from this, societal reactions towards homosexuals would also vary, as would the labelling and stigmatization effect. Therefore, should societal reaction cause, or contribute to the male homosexuals' problems, the problems cited in our society cannot be assumed to exist in any other culture and society. These problems are then limited to male homosexuals within our society, or societies with similar cultural and social settings. From the results of this research, we cannot confidently conclude that the male homosexuals in England or America for example, are experiencing the same problems.

The male homosexuals selected as respondents had to be within a certain age limit and are either students or employees.



This specific selection was necessary to enable an organised research methodology, sampling and finally, analysis. While a large number from the population of male homosexuals in the area of study belong to this age limit, an equally great number do not. Therefore, the limitation here is that the male homosexuals not within the specified categories, are not represented.

Among the male homosexuals who agreed to be interviewed, some of them have decided not to keep their sexuality a secret, while others keep it only from their families. However, it is not an unfounded assumption to suggest that quite a number of male homosexuals in our society are concealing their identity for fear of social pressure. Due to this, there is little opportunity to interview these male homosexuals who form an integral part of our society. Research and analysis will only be based from interviews of those who have revealed their sexuality. Again, the research and the problems cited will be limited to only a certain group of male homosexuals.

These are among the limitations that this research has not been exempted from.

## CHAPTER II

### ON HOMOSEXUALITY

#### 2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, emphasis will be placed on approaching the topic of homosexuality by looking at it from several perspectives. Initially, a basic understanding of homosexuality will be given through the examining of selected definitions and public misconceptions. Further clarifications will be made by comparing homosexuals to two other classifications and then, a summary of the theoretical factors causing homosexuality will be discussed. Finally, the operationalization of this research will be discussed.

Before proceeding into this chapter, it would be highly advantageous to define and clarify certain terms that are repeatedly used in this research. Homosexuality is labelled deviant sexual behaviour but it is always difficult to define deviance because it is a relative idea. According to LEONARD BROOM ( 1975 : 40 ) , deviance is " any conduct that violates social expectations; what is deviant depends on the standards set by a group or community. " SMELSER ( 1981 : 77 ) defines deviance " as behaviour that is viewed as a personally discreditable departure from a group's norms and incurs personal or group reactions that serve to isolate, treat, correct or punish the violator. "



There are two levels of deviance : what is known as primary deviance and secondary deviance. Primary deviance occurs when the " social rule is broken but not made public or overlooked, and the person breaking the rule does not think himself a deviant. " While secondary deviance is said to occur when the deviant act is discovered and made public because then " the person is labelled as deviant, is treated as deviant and gradually comes to see himself or herself as deviant. ( SMELSER, 1981 : 81 ) Secondary deviance is in the later level where the deviant actor accepts the identity and behaves accordingly to it.

In defining labelling theory, we find that it varies from the theories of deviance because it " stresses the process by which people are described as deviant, rather than the causes of deviance. " ( SMELSER, 1981 : 82 )

A stigma is " a characteristic of a person or group that is viewed as a defect and evokes efforts to punish, isolate or otherwise degrade those who are thought to have that characteristic " as is the definition also by SMELSER. Stigmas are also applied to the blind, handicapped, though not punishable in the usual sense.

## 2.2 What is Homosexuality ?

The very basis of increasing uneasiness about homosexuality is the fact that people really know too little, or have misunderstood it altogether. In addition to that, many are caught in several mis-

conceptions about homosexuality.

In Latin, the word 'homo' means man, however it is said that the term homosexual really comes from the Greek 'hom' , which means 'the same'.

What most people know about homosexuality is the fact that it is regarded as deviant sexual behaviour and only because it has been traditionally labelled so. Following which, stigmatization of homosexuals is in order as they are the purportive deviant actors. However, it is time that this narrow and limited conception be revamped.

Today, there are many definitions for the term homosexuality as it can be viewed from different perspectives. Among some of the definitions are :-

" ... to be a homosexual means nothing more or less than to love someone of the same sex. " ( FEINBLOOM, 1976 : 11 )

While a homosexual experience is described as,

" any physical arousal a person feels in response to someone of his or her own sex. " ( DEVI, 1977 : 11 )

A priest-psychiatrist defines homosexuals as,

" persons beyond puberty who feel sexually attracted, exclusively or otherwise, to members of their same sex. " ( ORAISON, 1977 )

Admist many other definitions, homosexual relationships are basically relationships where the sexual experience is sought after from members of the same sex, whether among males or females. For some, the other aspects of a relationship are equally as important, such as the



emotional, and this qualifies the homosexual relationship to be not so very different from the accepted heterosexual one.

A strange fact is that people do not realise " the ordinariness and commonplaceness of homosexuality " as so aptly put by SHAKUNTALA DEVI. In a single day's activities, a person could probably have interacted with male and female homosexuals for an unaccountable number of times without being aware of their sexuality. Homosexuals are no different from you and I. They can be of any race, any age, originating from any village or town and from any stratum in society. In the aspect of occupation, homosexuals are reputed to prefer the arts and are frequently into showbusiness, fashion designing, hairdressing and fine arts. However, homosexuals are found among teachers, lawyers, politicians, clerks and even policemen, but secrecy for these people is " a valuable protection against victimization. " ( DEVI, 1977 : 17 ) It is not an assumption, but a fact, that homosexuals come from all walks of life and are in every part of society but some are privileged with a social characteristic called " social invisibility. "

The famous sex-researcher, Alfred Kinsey, saw homosexuality and heterosexuality as existing on a continuum and he provides a diagram-scale of 1 - 6. '1' is the rating for those exclusively heterosexual, while '6' is meant for those that are exclusively homosexual.

The rating of "3" depicts those who are equally heterosexual and homosexual or what is better known as bisexuals. His scale clearly proves that the world is not populated by heterosexuals and homosexuals only, as assumed by most people. It should be understood that a single homosexual experience for a heterosexual person, or a 'straight', and a heterosexual experience for a homosexual does not change the person's basic sexual preference. While a great number of heterosexuals choose only members of the opposite sex as their sexual partners, and homosexuals, only members of the same sex, an equally great number lie in between. In this category, we will find some who are predominantly homosexual, or those who usually have homosexual experiences with an infrequent number of heterosexual ones as well, In contrast to this is the predominantly heterosexual, or heterosexual individuals with a sparse number of homosexual experiences. The most significant then are bisexuals, " individuals who respond sexually, although in different ways and on different bases, to a variety of people, regardless of their sex. " ( WEINBERG, 1982 : 208 ) Here, a person is said to be equally heterosexual and homosexual.

To understand homosexuality, an important step is to clarify the numerous misconceptions about it. One of the most important deals with the usage of the term itself. For most people, when using the word " homosexual " it usually refers to effeminated males only. This is usually the prevailing narrow-minded notion !



However, a homosexual really means a person, whether a man or a woman, who sexually prefers members of the same sex, as defined earlier. From this then can we divide them into male and female homosexuals; male homosexuals are also known as " gays " while " lesbians " refer to female homosexuals. In actuality, the term " gay " refers to all homosexuals, males and females.

Another common assumption is that all homosexuals are the same, that is as long as they behave in a certain way, keep a certain dress-code or frequent a particular spot, they must all belong to the same basket with a tag that says, " WIERDOES ". However, the fact is that a great number of homosexuals in our country do none of the above and they do not all fit into one basket, as ignorantly assumed. In fact, there are three possible categories of homosexuals. A common category, especially to be found in our society, is what is known as the " closeted "<sup>1</sup> homosexual. The term " closeted " is very relative in its definition but generally, it refers to homosexuals who are not even conscious of their sexuality due to a deliberate " block " from that fact, or those who go all out to hide their sexuality by going through the accepted motions of life.

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1 " closeted " is a jargon used to refer to homosexuals who do not openly admit their sexuality.

From the " closeted " homosexual, we move on to what is known as the " practising homosexual " or those who frequently participate in sexual acts. Within the group of " practising homosexuals " there are those who feel repulsion towards people of the opposite sex, and these are called the " exclusive homosexuals ".

The third kind is the " facultative homosexual " where the homosexual experience is accepted as there are no other alternatives for sexual outlet and incidences like these usually occur in prisons, hostels, armies and the like. However, as I pointed out earlier, experiences like these do not change the individuals basic sexual preference though it may influence it to a large extent.

In the heterosexual relationship there is usually a male and a female, each taking on their accepted role. The situation is no different in a homosexual relationship. A homosexual couple usually comprises of what is known as the " active " and the " passive " partners. The " active " is usually defined as the one who takes the masculine role, while the " passive " partner is more feminine and succumbs during sexual acts and even in daily life.

MICHAEL SCHOFIELD ( 1965 : 147 ) points out several misconceptions which he felt hindered discussions on homosexuality and rightly so. One of them is the inability to " distinguish between homosexual acts and the homosexual condition. " He states that, " homosexuality is not a type of conduct; it is a condition " and as



pointed out earlier, engagement in homosexual practises does not make a person a homosexual. He stated another misconception and that is " the tendency to see homosexuality only in medical terms, as a sickness or as a mental disorder " thus eliminating the really important social aspects pertaining to it.

Therefore, it is very important to approach homosexuality without bias as any form of preconception or misconception about it may blur our objectivity and create negative attitudes. MARC ORAISON suggests that the best approach is to adopt the stand that,

" Homosexuality does not exist - it is a word. People exist and human beings who have homosexual tendencies live with them as best they can. The homosexual type is fiction or caricature. "

### 2.3 The Difference Between Homosexuals, Transvestites And Transsexuals

Before I proceed any further, a clear explanation to delineate the difference between homosexuals, transvestites and transsexuals is of vital importance. As it is, our society has insufficient facts about homosexuality and homosexuals, and more often than not we find ourselves jumping to the conclusion that all three are the same ! From a general survey, it was found that the local terms commonly used, are among others, " pondan ",

" poyau " and " bapok "<sup>2</sup>, to refer to all three ! There seems to be no specific name for any of the three and this just proves how hazy our society's understanding of them is. What is more vexing is the fact that condemnation of them is based on this meagre and prejudiced information.

As had been previously mentioned, homosexuals are those whose sexual preference are to members of the same sex. Homosexuals look no different from the next person on the street. However, there are some male homosexuals who are more easily identifiable by the public as they are physically more effeminate, while a great number of others are very manly and macho-looking. For female homosexuals or lesbians, only those who are " butch "<sup>3</sup> or dressed in more manly clothes are easily identifiable. Although some homosexuals show an inclination to imitate the opposite sex, either in mannerism or attire, it should be understood that they have no intention, at one time or another, of changing their sex. Thus homosexuals, as ALAN BELL defines it, are persons who become " erotically aroused by people of the same sex and/or that the person engages in sexual behaviours with people of the same sex ".  
( BELL, 1975 )

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2 Local terms used by all races in the society where research was carried out to refer to all three categories as mentioned.

3 A jargon used to refer to manly looking females.



Transvestites are " individuals who take pleasure in dressing in the clothes associated with the opposite sex ".

( WEINBERG, 1982 : 208 ) For example, a man may put on a blouse and a skirt, carry a handbag and even acquire feminine mannerisms to give the impression that he is a woman, for his own pleasure or for performances and plays. In such a case, one would say that the person is in " drag "<sup>4</sup>. However, he remains the same person when all the feminine clothings are removed. A common assumption is that transvestites are homosexuals, whereas they are not.

Transsexuals are often mistaken to be homosexuals as well. Transsexuals are " people who are genetically of one sex but psychologically and emotionally of another " ( HUTCHINSON, 1979 ) They are those who have the desire to become members of the opposite sex and what they usually want is a permanent change. A sex operation is the ultimate so that the individual's external appearance will then correspond with the felt emotional and psychological being. In the case of a man who feels that he is a woman trapped in a man's body, a physical change would make him a complete person.

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4 A jargon used when referring to men dressed in women's clothing

THEREFORE, all three types are distinctly different from each other, each possessing different ultimates and representing different needs. It is often due to the lack of understanding of these three that multiplies the confusion existing about male homosexuals.

#### 2.4 Theoretical Factors Causing Homosexuality - Roots of Homosexuality

The basic problem in understanding homosexuality stems from the difficulty involved in establishing the source of the sexual orientation. Till today, there is no definite study to prove the origins of homosexuality. Conflicting opinions stand firm, that is, among those who feel that " homosexuality is an inborn trait ", those who feel " it is environmentally induced " and those that feel a " mixture of the two is responsible ".  
( WEINBERG, 1982 : 212 ) As homosexuality undeniably exists, understanding its roots would perhaps help approach homosexuality as a varied life-style, instead of a form of sexual deviance.

Among the existing theories :-

##### i. The Genetic and Hormonal Theories

While these theories have been popular for over a century, there is much too little empirical evidence to substantiate it. In the article on " Sexuality " WEINBERG mentions that " JOHN MONEY ( 1972 ) proposed that during fetal growth, the fetus



develops sexually in several stages ".( WEINBERG, 1982 : 214 )

In this theory, homosexual behaviour is said to be determined by the human chromosomes, that is, the part of the human cells that contain the genetic coding which determines the human beings's physical appearance, body structure and behaviour. This sex and overall determination occurs at the moment of conception. However, it is still speculative and therefore quite unreliable as evidence.

Another attempt was to determine if the imbalance in the secretion of fetal androgens by the fetal gonads will determine homosexual behaviour. According to WEINBERG, " if the male testes secrete fetal androgens, male structures will develop ". However, if androgens are not secreted in a chromosomally male fetus " the fetus will develop female reproductive structures ". Again, attempts to check this theory was disappointing as it was found that " the androgen levels had no etiological significance in treatment-seeking homosexuals ". ( WEINBERG, 1982 : 214 )

ii. The Psychoanalytical Theories

Sigmund Freud's theory on homosexuality is one of the most influential. In his original works, he saw " homosexuality as a variation of sexual functioning " ( WEINBERG, 1982 : 212 ) and not as a deviation. He believed that all human beings had to experience a normal homoerotic phase in childhood. In cases where the homosexual behaviour appears in later life, it could mean that the growth has been arrested or fixated during the homoerotic phase.



The Neo-Freudian view of homosexuality is that it is " a manifestation of psychological immaturity stemming from fixation during the individual's psychosexual development ". ( WEINBERG, 1982 : 213 ) The Neo-Freudians suggest several ways in which a person could become a homosexual : -

- " 1) through fixation;
- 2) as a result of exaggerated castration fear;
- 3) through narcissism; or
- 4) through overidentification.

Fixation occurs when the individual over invests psychic energy in some particular phase of development. It is seen as the primary mode through which an individual becomes a homosexual.

Fear of castration as a factor causing homosexuality explains the male homosexual's preference for men only. According to this theory, the man withdraws his penis from the vagina to avoid the castration of intercourse. By withdrawing his penis from women, the homosexual man turns his affections ( and his penis) towards members of the same sex, who are not seen as threatening.

Narcissism or falling in love with one's own contour, has also been postulated as an explanation for homosexuality. Instead of finding the form of the opposite sex sexually attractive, the homosexual is perceived as not being able to let go of the self-love of childhood to advance to the mature sexual love of a member of the opposite sex.

Overidentification with the parent or with members of the opposite sex is the final source of homosexuality cited by the Neo-Freudians. This overidentification is thought to occur especially in cases of men who have strong, domineering mothers and weak, submissive fathers. The man is viewed as wishing to emulate the mother for her strength. In overidentifying with the strong mother, the son takes on the mother's sexual preference for men. Interestingly, in the cultural group known most for having domineering mothers, Jews



have been found to have a lower than expected incidence of homosexuality. " ( WEINBERG , 1982 : 213 )

Very often parents are found to be the root of homosexuality.

IRVING BIEBER saw homosexuality " as a pathologic effect of fears of heterosexual functioning. " He studied more than a hundred homosexuals undergoing psychoanalysis and found that homosexuality has been consistently attributed to a pattern of domineering mothers and weak or absent fathers. BEIBER found the homosexuals to have " close-binding, controlling and affectionate " mothers, while their fathers were " detached, rejecting and frequently hostile ", resulting in seriously disturbed father-son relationships. ( BIEBER, 1962 )

Neo-Freudians hold the opinion that individuals become homosexuals due to some kind of failure, as can be noted in the above four causes, and it is found that KENNETH PLUMMER in " Sexual Stigma " agrees with this.

### iii. The Learning Theories

The social learning theorists believe that the socialization process in which every individual experiences is a very important factor in moulding the individual's sexual orientation. The question of rewards and punishment, and the environment in general, contribute greatly to this theory. From the many researches done in America , there is an over-lapping finding which shows that a good majority of homosexuals come from disturbed home backgrounds, where they experience difficulty in identifying with the parent of their own

sex. In the case of male homosexuals, the family usually has a very domineering mother who strives to bind her son very closely to herself, by being overprotective towards him, threatening or punishing him and a father who is usually absent, aloof or withdrawn.

The theory asserts that learning sexual behaviours is similar to learning all forms of behaviour. Learning how to be sexual, that is, how and when to relate to others sexually, which is part of the socialization process during childhood before sexuality becomes significant, is important in determining one's sexuality.

iv. Exposure to Homosexuals

It is hypothesized that early life exposure to homosexuals could cause homosexuality. This exposure refers to " both active seduction in childhood by an individual of the same sex and the common adolescent homosexual experimentation." This " fear of contamination " has no basis, especially when referring to objections made against homosexual teachers because sexual behaviour is not " usually discussed by teachers in any school setting " and homosexuals usually are " seeking relationships that will fulfil emotional as well as physical needs. " ( WEINBERG, 1982 : 214 ) A person is not considered mentally stable should he seek sexual fulfillment with a child.

Homosexual experimentation in adolescence is rather common,



especially among boys. When the period of experimentation is over, many sought heterosexual relationships. However, there are those who do prefer the homosexual relationship but " this preference is established far earlier than at the sexual experimentation stage. " ( WEINBERG, 1982 : 215 )

## 2.5 Operationalisation

The stigmatization of homosexuals in our society is undeniable and the stigma is seen expressed at nearly every level. It is no surprise to find homosexuals repeatedly ostracised from their own families and friends, being victimized and discriminated in their places of work and even condemned by the law.

Fearful of this persecution, many homosexuals resort to secrecy in their sexual orientation, while very few courageously reveal themselves. Both categories of homosexuals are not spared from the web of problems spun into their lives. They are forced to feel like an outcaste minority struggling against an unsympathetic majority.

## CHAPTER III

### SOCIETAL REACTIONS TO HOMOSEXUALITY

#### 3.1 Introduction

It is not possible to eliminate the question of societal reactions when dealing with the interactional problems experienced by male homosexuals in society.

" Homosexuality as a social experience simply cannot be understood without an analysis of the societal reactions towards it . " ( PLUMMER, 1975 : 102 )

This is because equally responsible for the interactional problems of the male homosexuals is the perceived hostility of the societal reactions towards homosexuality. This factor entails various problems which sprout from the need of secrecy and concealment to gain acceptance in society. This perceived hostility is not sufficiently perceived by the male homosexuals without any basis. It can be seen to reciprocate the societal reaction. As a minority, male homosexuals find the need to belong and thus the resulting formation of a sub-culture in society. Some researches could be conducted without giving weightage to societal reactions. However, emphasis should be placed in this particular research because the homosexuals here are to be seen within the confines of their hostile society.

Again, it should be remembered that homosexuality met with a variety of reactions throughout history. Recent studies have



provided dual reactions towards the topic of homosexuality. Opinions differed to condemn homosexuality as demoralizing and sinful as opposed to those who have taken a different perspective in their indepth but detached studies.

### 3.2 Attitudes towards homosexuality

The collection of data on the reactions towards homosexuality was carried out to tap an overall opinion of the public about homosexuals. Those that were selected were asked specific questions on their views on homosexuality. Table 3.1 refers to the different categories of respondents interviewed to represent society at large.

#### Respondents That Represent The Members of The Public

SELECTED RESPONDENTS			RACE			TOTAL NUMBER
			CHINESE	MALAYS	INDIANS	
PARENTS	FATHER	Fa	3	1	1	5
	MOTHER	Mo	3	1	1	5
TEACHERS	MALE	M	3	2	-	5
	FEMALE	F	5	-	-	5
EMPLOYERS	MALE	M	2	2	1	5
	FEMALE	F	3	1	1	5
PEER-GROUP	MALE	M	2	2	1	5
	FEMALE	F	3	1	1	5
			24	10	6	40

TABLE 3.1

Out of these 40 respondents, it can be seen that the selection is fairly wide as it includes the ages between 16 - 60, and especially the three major races in the country.

Respondents' Overall Attitude Towards Homosexuality

OVERALL ATTITUDE	SELECTED RESPONDENTS								TOTAL NUMBER	%
	PARENTS		TEACHERS		EMPLOYERS		PEER-GROUP			
	Fa	Mo	M	F	M	F	M	F		
POSITIVE	-	-	-	-	2	3	2	4	11	27.5
NEGATIVE	5	5	5	5	3	2	3	1	29	72.5

TABLE 3.2

With reference to Table 3.2, it can be seen that the overall negative attitude towards homosexuality in society is 72.5%.

Parents and teachers gave a 100% negative response. However, during the interview, 2 male and 4 female teachers were convinced that they could learn to accept their male homosexual students, given time. The positive attitude towards homosexuality derived mainly from respondents in the peer-group category which gave a 54.5% from the total of 11 respondents, while the remaining 45.5% came from the employers. Members of the peer-group showed that they were more open to changes in society, more accepting and more



willing to give the male homosexuals equal chances in life as long as they were, as DICK puts it, "Not in my way. " Another respondent from the peer-group category, a Malay boy, understands that homosexuality is against his religious values. However, he said that he can, and is willing to consider homosexuality from other perspectives. The respondents who contributed to the overall positive attitude from the employers category were found to be owners of boutiques, hair saloons and discotheques frequently. The managers of factories and supermarkets provided the negative attitude.

### 3.3 General Characteristics

In wanting to find out the images members of our society held about homosexuality, the 40 respondents were asked what they knew of homosexuality. Six options were suggested to them and the results are as in Table 3.3. The respondents were allowed to quote one or more of the suggested images.

Respondents' Images of Homosexuality

SELECTED IMAGES	NO. OF RESPONSES	%
SEXUALLY ABNORMAL	29	72.5
MENTALLY ILL	12	30.0
IMMORAL	18	45.0
EFFEMINATED	29	72.5
DANGEROUS	5	12.5
INSECURE	6	15.0

TABLE 3.3

From the above Table, it can be seen that 75% of these respondents hold the image that homosexuality is an abnormal form of sexual gratification. The image that homosexuality is immoral is 45%, and restricted to effeminated figures came close to 73%. This is not surprising in a society where religion plays an important role and the family unit is still held by conservative and traditional ties. It can be seen that about 30% of the 40 respondents are of the opinion that homosexuality is a result of mental instability. While the image of homosexuality being dangerous and is a result of insecurity, are held by fewer respondents.

The above data implies that society approaches the topic of homosexuality with certain set notions which have contributed to numerous misconceptions. In the classification of homosexuality



as abnormal, as opposed to the accepted heterosexual form of sexual experience, either knowingly or unknowingly, society rejects and scorns homosexuality. With this image and the prevailing negative attitude, is some form of perceived hostility on the part of the male homosexuals so surprising ?

Nearly 73% of those interviewed equated effeminism to homosexuality. Not only is this one of the most unfounded and widespread misconception in society, but it also reflects the human mind that seldom hesitates to make assumptions and conclusions based solely on visual recommendation. Undeniable is the fact that some male homosexuals tend to be effeminated but many more are not in the least. However, it is unfair to assume that a gentle or weakly-built person is a homosexual. This conception has made its impact on many physically weaker men, both " gay " and " straight ".

The image that homosexuality is immoral was the opinion of about half of those interviewed and this stand was probably adopted in the context of natural law and religion. As such, any mention or link to homosexuality is usually assumed to be just as immoral.

About one-third of the total respondents possess the 'sickness' stereotype about homosexuality. They believe the cause of homosexuality is due to some unexplainable psychological disturbance which then qualifies homosexuality as a mental illness

that needs treatment. Resulting from this, the homosexual individual will not be treated as one of society, but will either be deliberately avoided or segregated from the main of society.

A lesser percentage felt homosexuality denotes danger mainly because of the effeminated assumption. Those that are physically weak are seldom considered a threat to society. However, the notion that homosexuality could be dangerous is seen in the light of influence on the young. Children are taught to avoid and alienate what parents consider as sexual deviance, so that any possible influence could be minimized.

The image of homosexuality being a result of insecurity came from 15% of the respondents. This shows that only a small number of the public have attempted to view homosexuality from a more humane perspective.

#### 3.4 Relationship with Male Homosexuals

To study the public's relationship with male homosexuals, the respondents were first asked if they knew individuals who are homosexuals, and if they did, they were also asked about their interaction with the male homosexuals.

Out of the 40 respondents, it was found that :-

35/87.5% of them have at least met, seen or passed-by  
a male homosexual in their lives;

but only -



20/50% of the total number of respondents could say that they are acquainted with one. ( It is noted that 16 of these respondents were referring only to male homosexuals who are effeminated. )

There are several means of interaction and among them are, by introductions, through the places of work and by sexual propositions. These 20 respondents were asked their responses towards the male homosexuals during interaction with them. Four responses were suggested, which was quoted from KITSUSE ( PLUMMER, 1975 : 110 ).

CATEGORY	RESPONSES
I	Explicit disapproval and immediate withdrawal
2	Explicit disapproval and subsequent withdrawal
3	Implicit disapproval and partial withdrawal
4	No disapproval and relationship sustained

Based on the above suggested responses, the results are as follows in Table 3.4.

CATEGORY	NO. OF RESPONDENTS								
	PARENTS		TEACHERS		EMPLOYERS		PEER-GROUP		TOTAL
	Fa	Mo	M	F	M	F	M	F	
1	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	3
2	1	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	4
3	-	-	-	1	1	1	1	1	5
4	-	-	-	-	1	2	2	3	8
									20

TABLE 3.4

With only 20 respondents having some form of acquaintance with male homosexuals, that means half of the sample have never had any form of interaction with a single male homosexual, and yet, they contribute to the 72.5% negative attitude towards homosexuality. Responses from category ' 1 ' and ' 2 ', which are explicit disapproval and immediate and subsequent withdrawal, were elicited more frequently from the parents and teachers groups. The category ' 3 ' response of implicit disapproval and partial withdrawal is to be found mainly among the employers and peer-group respondents. The response of no disapproval and relationship sustained which is ' 4 ', came also from the respondents who are employers and in the peer-group, but much more frequent in the latter. This is significant of the changing attitudes and adaptability of the younger generation in society.



### 3.5 Legalizing Homosexuality

The respondents' attitude towards legalizing homosexuality in our society was asked quite specifically;

"Do you think homosexuality should be legalized?"  
"Why?"

The answers were found to be highly unsatisfactory because the respondents gave monosyllable answers and were unable to provide answers to the second part of the question. Majority of the respondents gave a confident 'no' towards the legalizing of homosexuality, while the rest were unsure or admitted that they really did not know as they have not given it much thought.

### 3.6 The Sexual Attitude

Initially we found 72.5% of the respondents to have a negative attitude towards homosexuality (Table 3.2) and in Table 3.3, 72.5% hold the image that homosexuality is sexually abnormal. When this sexual aspect was further elaborated, it was found that about 75% of the total respondents described it as 'disgusting', 'against nature' and 'unthinkable'. About 10% of them could only say that it was 'wrong' and the others had nothing to say about it but instead reversed the interviewer-respondent position with a number of questions.

In this chapter, an attempt has been made to explore the nature and sources of societal reactions to homosexuality.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE MALE HOMOSEXUAL RESPONDENTS' RELATIONSHIP WITH THEIR FAMILIES

#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with the relationship the male homosexual respondents have with their families. The fact that their families are aware, unaware or possibly suspicious of their sexuality gives rise to many different conditions in their relationship with their families, which is the source of the respondents' problems. The term family here refers to the immediate members of the family, more specifically parents, brothers and sisters.

#### 4.2 The Male Homosexual Respondents

It is necessary to have a general idea about the background of the male homosexual respondents before one can begin to analyse any aspect of them. Their families' socio-economic position will first be examined. While 50% of these respondents are presently employed, the Table 4.1 is based more on their parents' present income.



FAMILY INCOME IN M\$ PER MONTH	RESPONDENTS BELONGING TO FAMILIES WITH THESE NO. OF CHILDREN					TOTAL NOS. OF RESPONDENTS
	1	2	3	4	MORE THAN 5	
LESS THAN 1,000	-	2	-	-	2	4
BETWEEN 1,000 - 2,000	-	1	4	1	1	7
BETWEEN 2,000 - 4,000	-	2	1	1	1	5
MORE THAN 4,000	-	1	2	-	1	4
		6	7	2	5	20

TABLE 4.1

It is found that the parents of only one respondent is seperated while another respondent lost his father at the tender age of 10. Though all the respondents were hesitant to provide details that would reveal their families' private lives, through the effective methodology used, it was found that :-

8 of the respondents have very domineering mothers whom these respondents are quite afraid of. Their fathers are usually rather passive individuals who seem disinterested, and distant from the family.

In contrast to,

6 respondents who complain to having fathers who frighten the life out of them. While this fear of their fathers was embedded during childhood, it still remains significantly in their adult lives.

The respondents described the development of their fear as a change from physical fear to a psychological fear.

From the 20 respondents, 12 of them claim to have much better relationships with their mothers as compared to their fathers. They find that they can relate more closely with their mothers, as their fathers are either too busy, too distant and cold or too frightening. The other 8 respondents have little, or no relationship at the present with both their parents. While many admitted to respecting their fathers, no respondent claimed to having a better relationship with their fathers when compared to their mothers.

All the 20 homosexual respondents related the relationship they now have, or USED TO HAVE, with their families and to see this relationship in a clearer perspective, the respondents are categorised as follows :-

( i ) Effeminated/Non-Effeminated Respondents

From the 20 respondents interviewed;

13 respondents are described as effeminated, and

7 respondents are described as non-effeminated.

( ii ) Revealing of Sexuality to The Family

From the 20 respondents interviewed;

14 respondents have not revealed themselves,

3 respondents voluntarily revealed themselves, and



3 respondents were found out by their parents.

(iii) Presently Experiencing Problems

From the 20 respondents interviewed;

12 respondents are presently experiencing many problems,

6 respondents used to have problems, and

2 respondents hardly have any problems either presently or in the past.

The above categorization of the respondents is arranged in Table 4.2 .

S E X U A L I T Y	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS							
	EFFEMINATED				NON - EFFEMINATED			
	WITH PROBLEMS		WITHOUT PROBLEMS		WITH PROBLEMS		WITHOUT PROBLEMS	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
- NOT REVEALED	8	40	-	-	4	20	2	10
- REVEALED	-	-	2	10	-	-	1	5
- FOUND OUT	-	-	3	15	-	-	-	-
	8		5		4		3	
		40		25		20		15
								100%

TABLE 4.2

The compartmentalization is done as in Table 4.2 as the relationship the male homosexual respondents have with their families may be problematic, depending on various factors, such as, whether the individual respondent is described as effeminated or otherwise and whether the family is knowledgable about the respondents'

3 respondents were found out by their parents.

(iii) Presently Experiencing Problems

From the 20 respondents interviewed;

12 respondents are presently experiencing many problems,

6 respondents used to have problems, and

2 respondents hardly have any problems either presently or in the past.

The above categorization of the respondents is arranged in Table 4.2 .

S E X U A L I T Y	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS							
	EFFEMINATED				NON - EFFEMINATED			
	WITH PROBLEMS		WITHOUT PROBLEMS		WITH PROBLEMS		WITHOUT PROBLEMS	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
- NOT REVEALED	8	40	-	-	4	20	2	10
- REVEALED	-	-	2	10	-	-	1	5
- FOUND OUT	-	-	3	15	-	-	-	-
	8		5		4		3	
		40		25		20		15
								100%

TABLE 4.2

The compartmentalization is done as in Table 4.2 as the relationship the male homosexual respondents have with their families may be problematic, depending on various factors, such as, whether the individual respondent is described as effeminated or otherwise and whether the family is knowledgable about the respondents'



sexuality, that is whether the respondent remains " closeted " can be equated to respondents who have not revealed their sexuality, the words " not revealed " will be referred to more frequently.

It should be understood also that this compartmentalizing of respondents was selected to simplify the description used to differentiate the respondents and for clearer analysis. No particular problem experienced by either of the respondents is exclusive to their category.

#### 4.3 The Non-Effeminated Respondents

The relationship between the 7 non-effeminated male homosexual respondents and their families will be analysed first.

Due to their non-effeminism, there is hardly cause for them to be suspected by their families. These respondents feel that there is no necessity to reveal their sexuality to their parents and families. The 6 or 85% of the respondents agreed that it would only invite unnecessary problems. The seventh respondent, after finally accepting himself, decided that he should also be honest with his parents and brothers. Four years ago, he " came out of the closet ", which means to reveal his sexuality, however only to find that it brought hurt, disappointment and confusion to his family. Since then, all the members of his family have finally learnt to accept him, except for his father who has not got over the shock. From his single experience, it is not surprising why the other 6 respondents feel

safer to remain " closeted ". Very often, these respondents can only imagine the worst reaction from their families should they reveal their sexuality and similar traumatic reactions from the other male homosexuals' families, only confirm their worst fears.

From the 6 respondents, 4 admitted to having more problems in their relationship with their families. Similar problems were cited, though in varying degrees :-

The first and foremost is the fact that they are unable to be themselves. On the one hand, this may sound very exaggerated and pretentious because as a member of the family you have specific role regardless of the fact whether you are a homosexual or " straight ". However, the knowledge that a very important fact about the individual is being kept a secret from his own family, results in a guilt feeling in his relationship with them. He is forced to be on the alert so as not to get carried away in their presence and accidentally reveal his own secret. All the 6 respondents feel this way and the seventh used to feel the same. They all agreed that while there is no cause for suspicion by their families, it is all the more reason why they should keep up their successful front.

For the 4 respondents, it is very difficult to keep an honest or open relationship with their families, especially their parents. As it is impossible to be truthful about their whereabouts, activities and compassions, they frequently are forced to lie in order to avoid suspicion.



Two respondents from the above 4 admitted to more serious lies when their mothers suggested the idea of marriage. Though very uncertain of fulfilling it, both respondents were forced to make certain promises which gave hope to their elders.

A common example when these respondents remain tensed and very cautious in their own homes, is when they are talking on the phone to their companions. Much as they do not wish to put on a pretext, they feel it would be a mistake to speak up openly and frankly. Resulting from which causes a strain in their relationship with the other members of their family.

While several other incidents were cited, all of them are based on the fact that these respondents feel that lies, putting up a front, play-acting, not only is necessary in their relationship with their families, but has now become very important. While an open, honest and frank relationship is desired, most of them agree that it is not possible at the present time.

#### 4.4 The Effeminated Respondents

The 13 respondents who are in this category are subdivided again. The first to be discussed will be the 8 respondents who have not revealed their sexuality. However, 2 respondents from this 8 suspect that their families have already guessed their secret. This will be followed by the 2 respondents who voluntarily revealed their sexuality to their families and finally, the 3 respondents who were

" found out " by their families.

All the 8 respondents, or 61.5% from the total number of effeminated respondents, admitted to having many problems in their relationship with their families. The respondents were then asked if they were going to reveal their sexuality to their families and, if so: When do they feel is the appropriate time. The results are seen in Table 4.3

	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	
	PRESENT	FUTURE
YES	-	3/37.5%
NO	3	/37.5%
ALREADY SUSPECTED	2	/25 %
	8	/100 %

TABLE 4.3

Based on the above table, 25% of these respondents feel very sure that their families are aware of their sexuality while the other 75% are not. Half of this 75% intend revealing their sexuality in the near future but the other half, or 37.5% have absolutely no intention of doing so. Inevitably, these three conditions serve some function, that is, they affect the relationship these respondents are having with their families. All these 8 respondents in the



effeminated category who have not voluntarily revealed their sexuality, are seen to experience rather similar kinds of problems and any differences that exist are usually due to the stated conditions. It is also found that they share similar problems with the non-effeminated respondents.

A common problem, experienced by all the respondents in their relationship with their families, is being unable to have an honest relationship with them. They find that having to lie to their families so necessary, and is done frequently and repeatedly. Similar to the non-effeminated, these lies are usually answers to questions regarding the respondents' whereabouts, activities and companions. As they are unable to be truthful, they resort to either lying or providing evasive answers to their families. Resulting from which the relationship they have can hardly be an open or frank one. As time goes on, the situation gets much worse. In contrast to these respondents, are respondents who hardly or never at the present time, experience this problem once they have revealed their sexuality. It is found that 25% from this category experience this problem at a lesser degree. Having been suspected by their families, their families are more tactful in asking interrogating questions. This is one of the reasons that gave them cause to confirm the possible suspicion by their families.

The following problem is also very common among respondents who have not revealed their sexuality. 87.5% of the 8 respondents

admitted that they usually behave very differently at home when with their families as compared to when they are outside, with friends or just by themselves. Being effeminated, most of their mannerism would automatically be feminine too. However, these respondents consciously take on a role expected of them by their families. Among the examples given, were forcefully lowering their voices to sound more aggressive when speaking to their parents, especially their fathers; showing an interest in the topics men usually rave about and even having to sit with legs apart at home. In addition to that, they are practically forced not to converse or show the slightest interest in the arts, in hairdressing, in fashion or in cooking. While there are many other topics which these respondents may converse with their families, they are unable to express to their families the topics which most interest them. This setback not only reduces the opportunity for a closer relationship, it causes a strain in their relationship. The respondents then begin to feel they have very little in common with their parents, or their families and their communicational difference widens. However, it is found that none of the respondents wish to lose their relationship with their families so they do force themselves to suit the expectations and to avoid suspicion.

Under the three conditions, one of the two respondents who think that his family has guessed his sexuality, would not say he behaves differently but in a reserved manner. The other does



behave differently as he was reprimanded before for his feminine behaviour. The three respondents who intend revealing their sexuality in future, are behaving differently to avoid suspicion for the present. The other three respondents can be said to be definitely pretending to be " straight ".

Very often, this demand to behave differently is also extended to the respondents' friends who visit them in their homes. Though it varies with each individual, all 8 respondents have at one time or another asked their friends to behave differently while visiting them. They hold the assumption that their parents are able to learn certain things about them by observing their friends and none of them wish to take such a risk. An extreme example, given by PETER, about a respondent in this category,

" ..... He is too much. I am one of his close friends in school but when he accidentally meets me while out with his mother, he just ignores me or manages a slight nod. He really is so scared. "

7 of the 8 respondents found that their controlling of their voices and topics of discussion are not limited to their conversations with their family members, rather it depends on where they are. They find that the same pretext is necessary when conversing with their friends at their homes or when they are on the telephone. Although this does not directly affect their relationship with their families, it definitely does build up to a relationship that moves further away from them.

Consequently, all the respondents do experience stress and tension in the confines of their own homes with their families. They find it very difficult to be themselves in many ways. It is undeniable then that their relationship with their families are affected, whether explicitly or implied, by the fact that homosexuality is not accepted by our society.

On the other hand, there are some homosexual respondents who do reveal their sexuality voluntarily to their families, either because they are more courageous or because they are too tired of deceiving their families, with the hope that a new and better relationship may result.

From the 13 respondents, 2 of them voluntarily disclosed their secret to their parents and family. One of them is Peter, a very effeminated student who became the target of the children in his neighbourhood with names like " pondan " and " sissy ". He knew it would reach his parents' ears and would have a bad effect on them. So after months of indecision, he decided it would be best to tell them because he would then be able to be himself and his parents would not have to find out from someone else. Although there was a difficult period in their relationship, it was very short and his parents have begun to accept it. The second respondent, after years of secrecy and deception, decided to disclose his sexuality but to this day, he still feels their unwilling acceptance at home.

From the 20 homosexual respondents it is found that only



3 respondents voluntarily revealed their sexuality. Although they do have a better relationship with their families now, that is, an honest and open relationship as far as their sexuality is concerned, they too had their share of similar problems to those who have not revealed their sexuality yet. However, all 3 respondents experienced a very dramatic period in their relationship with their families when they disclosed their sexuality. Although there were no stormy arguments, their parents did make a frantic attempt to advise them to change. Realising their unsuccessful attempt, a period of anti-response followed. Much later, depending on the individual family, followed a period of unwilling acceptance, and for some, a final acceptance.

The 3 respondents whose sexuality was found out by their parents, had their share of problems too before and during that period. All three respondents are very effeminated physically and in their mannerisms. Before any of them were found out, they led a life very similar to the group of 8 effeminated respondents. The incidents which led to their parents finding out are very different and will be related briefly.

The first was seen in school with a group of effeminated boys by his mother during a surprise visit to school. The matter was brought home and a very heaty argument followed. He was given a lot of warnings and advice to change himself, and he knew it was impossible. His mother constantly checked on him and had him followed everywhere he went. Then she heard a rumour that he had a male

friend and confronted him. He did not deny it and this was followed by more arguments and advice. This period lasted for 8 - 9 months. After completing school and working for 4 years, he knows that they still do not accept the fact that their son is a homosexual. He no longer faces the problem of his sexuality in his relationship with them because they do not have much of a relationship anymore.

The second respondent did not have to go through an argument with his family. Instead, he experienced a long period where his parents attempted to force him into what society conceives as being manly. His effeminism was obvious since the age of 12. His parents' unsuccessful attempt was made during his teenage years. Since then, his family has grown to accept his effeminism, though it does not lift the strain off their relationship.

The third respondent experienced a very stormy relationship in the past. When the rumour that their son was a homosexual reached his parents' ears, they tried very hard to talk him out of it. When this had no effect, a series of quarrels and arguments in between serious discussions started. They kept a very close watch on him all the time. This period lasted for 5 years until he left home. Now, he lives on his own and seldom sees them.

While all three respondents admit that they do not have direct problems in their relationship with their parents and families, it cannot be said that their relationship is normal either. Due to the influence of the knowledge of their sexuality, their relationship



cannot, but be tainted in some measure.

## CHAPTER TWO

### RESEARCH DESIGN

#### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter is organized into two parts as it deals with the relationships experienced by the respondents at different levels. This chapter will be divided as follows:-

- the role, personal background, their friends and acquaintances
- the role of the respondents at work
- the role of the respondents in their family
- the role of the respondents in their social life.

The respondents in this research are either students or employees. For simplification, it is necessary to categorize them as follows:-

TYPE OF RESPONDENTS	QUANTITATIVE	QUALITATIVE	TOTAL OF RESPONDENTS
IN SCHOOLS	1	2	3
IN UNIVERSITIES	2	4	6
EMPLOYED	6	1	7
	9	7	16

## CHAPTER V

### THE MALE HOMOSEXUAL RESPONDENTS'

#### RELATIONSHIP WITH PEOPLE

##### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter is separated into several parts as it deals with the relationships experienced by the male homosexual respondents at different levels. This chapter will be seen as follows :-

- the male homosexual respondents, their friends and acquaintances;
- the male homosexual respondents at work;
- the male homosexual respondents and the law;
- the male homosexual respondents and their sexual life.

The 20 respondents in this research are either students or employees, and for simplification, it is necessary to categorize them as below :-

TYPES OF RESPONDENTS	EFFEMINATED	NON EFFEMINATED	NO. OF RESPONDENTS
IN SCHOOLS	3	1	4
IN UNIVERSITIES	2	4	6
EMPLOYED	8	2	10
	13	7	20

TABLE 5.1



In the previous chapter, emphasis was placed on the effeminated or non-effeminated criteria in the respondents. However, in this chapter the present position of the respondents have to be considered because their social environment now varies to a great extent. Not only is the influence of their present social environment important, but their ages and assumed level of maturity allows varying degrees of responsibility and freedom.

## 5.2 Relationship with Friends And Acquaintances

It should first be explained that the term 'friends' refer to a variety of people, excluding the members of the family, with whom the respondents are adequately close and attached to. In addition to that, not only do the parties involved value the friendship, but seek to continuously strengthen it. Acquaintances would include everyone else the respondents have had some form of contact with.

( As the data for analysis is not easily tabled, it will be explained thoroughly. )

### 5.2.1 Respondents in Schools

From the 4 respondents who are in public secondary schools, it is found that nearly all their good friends are also in the same school. All 4 claim also to have friends who are not in school but the number does not exceed 5 people. It is noted that acquaintances

other than their classmates, are few in school, whereas acquaintances outside of school are more in number. All 3 effeminated respondents find that their good friends in schools are usually effeminated male homosexuals also. The other non-effeminated respondent has the advantage of moving more freely in school with the rest of the student community without being stigmatized.

The only non-effeminated respondent does not experience the numerous problems effeminated respondents face. He is able to avoid detection and suspicion. The only problem he faces is that he is unable to be his true self, that is, restricted from speaking freely or behaving in the way he would with people who know of his sexual preference. In other words, he puts on a "straight" image in school. He is forced to relate non-existing exploits to his friends and acquaintances in school to be one of them.

For those who are effeminated, grouping together saves them from the problems experienced by the other respondent. It also gives them more courage and therefore are able to stand the pressure from certain sections in school. They usually do not need to control their tone nor the topic of conversation with the student community because their being a homosexual is a known fact. However, this does not spare them from the other problems, like a very common one of being the target of humiliating and spiteful remarks. As these respondents are seniors in their schools, these remarks, in the form of jokes or just plain teasing, usually come from students who are



in the lower secondary classes. When these same respondents were in the lower secondary, these remarks came from their own classmates and their seniors in school. For the respondents, these remarks used to hurt very much because not only were they being laughed at but they were being the source of other people's amusement. By now, they feel very immune to what they describe as " a cheap thrill for the childish ". In addition to that, it is noted that these remarks are seldom made directly or by a loner. Very often, it is whispered loudly within the earshot of the respondents and amidst a crowd of boys.

Another problem experienced in school is that, while they are known as " pondans " of the school, they do not really know the other students, or manage to make friends with the rest of the student community. While they could be accused of deliberately excluding themselves, the reality that " straight " students are afraid to be acquainted with them for fear of being identified as one of them, cannot be denied. In such a small and closed-up community, gossip spreads very quickly and this could ruin a " straight " student's reputation. With this notion, many students keep a distance from the respondents and any form of interaction is either minimal or deliberately " in the open".

A situation which aggravates all 3 effeminated respondents in schools is having their potentialities decided for them. Should any of these respondents show an interest in sports and athletics, the

student community either jeers or sympathises with them. However, when volunteers are needed for a dance or to organise a Teacher's-Day celebration, these respondents find themselves unanimously elected by the class. Although none of the respondents are bitter about it, they feel rather disappointed that such expectations are made on them. Very often they want to venture into a new area, to find their own potentialities but the voice of the majority succeeds in pressuring them away. All 3 respondents agreed that life in school can be miserable at times, not only due to the burden of examinations, but because their effeminism has robbed them of certain rights in school. This then leads to the deprivation of certain experiences and advantages priviledged to teenagers.

#### 5.2.2 Respondents in Universities

As the academic orientation of the respondents in institutes of higher learning varies, it is found that the influencing factors in their life-styles follow sooth. In a comparatively loosely-knitted realm, the respondents find that their social life can easily be kept apart from their academic life.

Quite contrary to the respondents in schools, all the 6 respondents are definite that the majority of their good friends, or people they prefer to be with, are to be found outside of their own universitites. Having good, close friends in local universities who really know all about you and are able to accept you for what you



are, is a rarity. This statement was agreed upon by all 100% of the respondents. However, this agreement was made in reference to the "straight" community. It is found that the good friends of the respondents in universities are either the few non-closeted male homosexuals or the small number of the more accepting female community. Even so, all the respondents are sure that their good friends in universities would not total to more than 10.

This brings us to the first problem experienced by the respondents. Sam's opinion from his experience is typical of an under-graduate homosexual in a local university;

"There are many "straight" people in university whom I could be friends with but they would never really be my "friends" in its true sense. If you really are in need of friends whom you can open up to, you 'd have to seek out the other male homosexuals. But why bother, I have a great number of them outside. You would be wrong to assume that the number of gays in university are few, there are many, I assure you. But, most of them are "closet-queens".

It is understandable that respondents are unable to relate their sexual preferences in an open discussion but that is not their problem because the sexual issue is merely one among a host of others. The fact that causes the respondents to retreat from, or terminate a relationship comes from personal experiences. This same experience was felt by all 4 non-effeminated respondents in universities though in varied situations;

"I did not isolate myself in the beginning but I was sane enough not to disclose my sexuality. When I started mixing with an all-male group in my course,



I found that they were quite alright. However, so far our topics of discussion only dealt with studies. One day, while we were in town together, a very dressed-up effeminated gay passed by us and the topic of conversation began. They voiced out their opinions - that homosexuals are all sick people, homosexuality is grotesque, that one could not imagine what homosexuals did together and numerous other crude tags were attached to homosexuals. I was too surprised for words but I calmly asked if any of them personally knew a homosexual and their answers were definite "No's". It dawned on me that these "friends" of mine were not only shallow but were immature enough to make strong accusations without any first hand evidence."

It is found that all the respondents who are in universities share a similar atmosphere at their respective places, and probably the reason why many fight to remain as what Sam described as "closet queens." However, all agreed that while this may be the prevailing opinion, there are a handful of students who really do understand and accept homosexuality. 4 respondents or 66% of them would say that quite a majority of students are genuinely curious and very interested to know and understand more about homosexuality and homosexuals. This is not so surprising as it was found that "straight" respondents in the peer-group were more willing and open, to changes and later, the probable acceptance of that change.

When comparing relationships of friends and acquaintances or those who are not family, with members of the family, it is found that relationships are avoidable in the former, but not in the latter. While these same respondents have to play the role expected of them



in their homes daily, they have no wish to succumb to similar pressures outside of their homes. As a result of this, no effort is usually made to salvage a relationship that may be going through some difficult times, with their friends and acquaintances. They prefer either to avoid it altogether or just abandon the issue. When the respondents were asked if this could be a manner of escapism or if it reflected them as shallow individuals, their responses were found to vary slightly but generally, it was agreed that it is more important to have a few good friends than an uncountable number of friendly strangers.

From the 6 respondents, 3 of them shared with me an observation made in their years in universities. It has been observed that, whether it be in the library or the canteen, when an effeminated, and probably homosexual male walks pass, heads will turn in his direction. Frequently, this is followed by smiles or the use of eye language to acknowledge his presence among them and sometimes short whispers are heard after he passes. While this may not be a direct problem, this treatment and attitude confirms the worst fears felt by the male homosexuals, that is, the non-acceptance of them in society.

When the 2 effeminated respondents were asked if they did experience this, they both said that they have long given up on caring about such things.

### 5.2.3 Respondents Who Are Employees

For these 10 respondents, there is a clear difference between their friends, working colleagues, employers and clientele. Clientele refers to their customers or guests. For example, a respondent who is a hairstylist would have customers coming to his shop for a hair-cut, while a respondent who works in a hotel would deal with the hotel guests. Only the respondents' friends will be discussed here.

As compared to the previous two categories of respondents, these respondents are controlled to a lesser degree by institutions of any kind.

From the 10 respondents only 1 of them is very tightly supervised by his family to the point that he does not know another male homosexual and is close to 2 particular girls only.

As for the other 9, their best friends usually belong to the male homosexual community also. However, everyone of them admitted to having a few good friends who are usually single males and females, or young married couples. Except for the usual kind of friction common to all relationships, they do not experience any sort of problems with these friends. For them, these are the people whom they have opened up to, and it is with these people that they are themselves, not only because they are accepted for what they are but also because the question of stigmatization does not arise at all. However, it is found that most of these friends



have been made in recent years.

These respondents were asked about their old friends made much earlier on in their lives. Going as far back as recalling their friends and acquaintances from during their school days, only 2 respondents would safely say that they still have very good friends since then. However, for one of the two, his good friends incidentally are also male homosexuals too and that has probably made their relationship lasting. The other respondent boasts about his "straight" close friends since school days. It is found that he is the only one whose close friends are straight and their friendship has strengthened through the years before he realised his sexuality till the present. The remaining 7 do recall having good friends in school but none of their friendship lasted more than a year after school. While some of them suggested this could be due to different obligations, they all agreed that it is more than that. An example, as related by a respondent, was during a chance meeting between this effeminated respondent with his friends and his straight executive friend who was with his colleagues. While the whole group of male homosexuals were familiar with him, they all greeted him rather spontaneously but he only returned a slight nod and a forced smile. As they watched him in great surprise, they saw him giving his colleagues a "brush-off" explanation like the majority of society, he is ashamed to acknowledge his relationship with male homosexuals though it was only a platonic one.

For the respondents who realise their sexuality after they leave school, their relationship with their good friends usually take to extremes, that is, the friendship either ends on disclosure of their sexual preference or it strengthen even more.

It is found that respondents of different categories experience problems in very different situations and at varied measures although reference is made to the same aspect.

### 5.3 Relationship in their social economic setting

In this discussion, students and working respondents will be seen in their respective settings.

#### 5.3.1 Respondents in Schools

While their relationship with their friends and acquaintances in school have been dealt with, we will now consider their relationship with their teachers. While the one non-effeminated respondent would again not be the target of suspicion, or stigma, the other 3 respondents did not complain either. They are positive that the majority of the teaching staff are well aware of their sexuality but none of them have experienced unjust treatment in class or outside of it. They find that the reverse occurs in that the teachers treat them with more gentleness and caution. They do not deny the possibility that certain teachers may resent them but, as long as it does not become public resentment that would humiliate them, they have no reason



to complain.

#### 5.3.2 Respondents in Universities

Rather similar to those in schools, these respondents have never had problems with lecturers or the authorities in their universities regarding their sexuality. This is hardly surprising as only 2 out of the 6 respondents are effeminated. The incidents these 2 effeminated respondents quoted are like the receiving of lengthened stares from administrative staff and security officers, and other similar treatment given by the student community. There has never been a real problem stemming from their sexuality. The 2 effeminated respondents have experienced disapproval from their lecturers, who suspect their sexuality, but this in no way affected their studies and they admitted to not really being bothered at all.

Again it can be noted that relationships with either teachers or lecturers are within a limited span of time only, and outside of that, the whole relationship is avoidable.

#### 5.3.3 Respondents Who are Employees

In this section, we will see the respondents specifically in their working environment, that is, the place these respondents spend most of their time. We will see the respondents' relationship with their employers, their colleagues and their clientele. The occupation of these respondents are divided into what is referred to

as " the creative " and " the public services " sectors.

For " the creative ", it would include hair-styling, fashion designing, art, music and cooking, while " the public services " include working in the banks, factories, hotels and government offices.

TYPE OF OCCUPATION	EFFEMINATED	NON EFFEMINATED	TOTAL
THE CREATIVE	6	1	7
THE PUBLIC SERVICES	2	1	3
	8	2	10

TABLE 5.2

It has frequently been said that male homosexuals tend to have an artistic aptitude and this holds true at least for the 10 working respondents because 70% of them have taken on occupations which require innate artistic potentialities.

The 6 effeminated respondents with the creative type of occupation, did not relate any outstanding problems when seeking for their jobs in their chosen field. Although all of them have changed their place of employment several times, they have always kept to the same field. Except for the occasional difference of opinion about business, service or quality of production, none of them have experienced problems with their employers due to their



being homosexuals. It is noted that very often some of them remain self-employed for a long period of time between jobs. This is usually because the jobs that interest them are unavailable and they are frequently unsuccessful with employment in fields related to " the public services ".

The 2 effeminated respondents are attached to a hotel and a factory respectively. When recalling the time of his interview, the one respondent saw that the interviewers had little faith in him. However, he had enough confidence and experience to to back himself up. The other respondent did not have much problems in getting the job either, because the factories were short-staffed at the assembly line and he admitted to forcing himself to be as manly as possible during the interview. The respondent in the factory does not interact with his employers directly while the reverse is true for the respondent in the hotel. Although rumours about him are spreading in the hotel, he does his job well so as not to give any cause of his employers to think him unsatisfactory.

The only non-effeminated respondent in the creative occupation, runs a private school of arts. He is confident that his employers do not suspect him of being a homosexual and admits to the usual sort of problems only. However, the only non-effeminated respondent in " the public services " is employed in a bank. While he had no problems getting the job, he was recently threatened in a misunderstanding that his employers would be told of his sexual

preference. While his other friends assured him that nothing could happen from that, he was genuinely worried and confused. He felt that if he was not asked to resign, he himself would voluntarily leave.

All the 10 respondents did not have to face any outstanding problems in seeking for employment. Among the reasons why this is so, is probably because the respondents themselves do not venture out of certain occupations. Especially the effeminated respondents, they take on jobs which are not only suitable to them but frequently expected of them.

When looking at the relationship between the respondents and their work colleagues, it is found that the situation is rather different. It has first to be noted that the environmental setting between respondents who are employed in the creative sectors and those in the public services sectors vary to a great extent. Being the case, it is not unfounded to assume that their colleagues differ in an overall measure.

For the 6 effeminated respondents who are employed in " the creative " sort of occupation, I observed their colleagues to be mostly young females who are very orientated with the latest in fashion and ideas. Not only do they show themselves to be very modern in the physical aspect but also in their ideas and opinions through conversations. All 100% of these respondents complained of rather severe problems in the initial stages of employment. They



found their colleagues rather difficult to get along with during the first few weeks. Not only did they find themselves receiving the normal cold treatment given to a stranger but their effeminity gave more cause for their colleagues to be doubly cautious of them. However, when this period of orientation was over, the respondents found that things got better. There have been cases when respondents had misunderstanding with their colleagues and very often, the respondents were immediately reminded of their being homosexuals through the use of abusive language which aimed at putting the respondents down. This is reflective of the fact that while they get along in the course of their work, their colleagues always feel that they have the added advantage over the respondents because the respondents happen to be male homosexuals.

Gossip is another common malicious event in the lives of the effeminated respondents. They are aware that their movements are being watched by their colleagues who take an interest in what the respondents are up to, who the respondents are out with, or what scandal the respondent is involved. Some respondents are very cautious about this, while others do not worry at all about it. However, it has been found that in the history of 3 or 50% of them, has this situation forced them to seek new employment.

The only non-effeminated respondent in a similar line of occupation, finds that he is exposed to similar problems. While there is no cause for suspicion initially, he finds that his colleagues



soon realises his sexual preference as they familiarise themselves with his friends and daily activities. Compared to the colleagues of the earlier respondents who know a fact that is already known by other people, these colleagues feel as if they have been allowed in on a secret exclusively. While this respondent supervises his colleagues to a certain extent, they do not hesitate to make him feel inferior at times.

The problems faced by the two effeminated respondents who are attached to the public services are much worse. Not only is the staff at the hotel and the factory large in number but highly unsympathetic to any form of deviation. This can be seen reflected in the treatment given to the two respondents. While the hotel staff seems friendly enough to him, the amount and maliciousness of their gossips about him is close to ruining his reputation. Presently, he is quite fearful that this will jeopardise his position in the hotel, as hotel policies are rather tight on their employees. Very often too the respondent is teased by the male staff and proposition for sex is offered in the attempt to belittle the respondent. As for the other respondent, he was aware that it would be unwise to give in to his natural effeminated self in the factory so he started " playing it straight " from the beginning. However, after a few years it got rather tiring and he began to slacken in this resolution. Following which he became the target of strange stares, teasing and spiteful remarks. The worst of events were yet to come when he found



himself falling in love with a straight colleague who already had a girlfriend. The colleague sincerely regarded him as only a friend but this was sadly misunderstood. In his attempt to discourage the respondent, their strong friendship fell apart. Word in the factory got around and everyone started laughing at him for, as crudely put, "chasing a man". In addition to that, he is sure that though he is a supervisor, few of them really respect him nor take him seriously. In response to this, he works doubly hard to prove his capabilities as a person. While this is quite unnecessary, the respondent is made to feel small and insecure and so has to secure himself in other ways.

The only non-effeminated respondent in the public services sector is able to keep his sexual preference a secret. There is no reason to suspect him and no reason for him to reveal his sexuality. He cannot recall, other than the usual sort of minor misunderstanding with his colleagues at work.

However, their clientele comprises mostly of both male and female teenagers, and young adults. For the respondent in an internationally known hotel frequented by foreigners, this problem is even decreased because the foreign clients are not in the least perturbed by him being effeminated.

#### 5.4 The Male Homosexuals And The Law

Here in Malaysia, homosexuality is a criminal offence which is provided for under " Unnatural Offences " , Section 377 and 377A of the Penal Code. It reads ;

" of Unnatural Offences

377 Whoever voluntarily has carnal intercourse against the order of nature with any man, woman or animal, shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to twenty years , and shall also be liable to fine or to whipping.

377A Any male person who, in public or private, commits or abets the commission of, or procures or attempts to procure the commission by any male person of , any act of gross indecency with another male person, shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to two years. "

(Penal Code (F.M.S. Cap. 45), 1980 : 122)

More recently, it was published in a local newspaper that,

" Men found guilty of involvement in homosexual activities can be jailed up to 20 years, fined or caned for their offences , the Dewan Negara was told . "

(The Star, Friday 13th April, 1984)

However, it should be noted that this applies only to men and such provision does not exist for women.

It is obvious that our law regards homosexuality as some-



thing that is against the order of nature, and following which, it is punishable.

While studies carried out by the Kinsey researchers in the United States of America and those in England have reported thousands of arrest and convictions of male homosexuals, it is very infrequent here. From all the 20 respondents interviewed, not one of them has ever been arrested or convicted in the past of homosexual acts. Neither has any of them been suspected or picked-up for questioning by the police at any one time due to their sexuality.

The situation is such not because our relevant authorities are lenient in the implementation of the law but quite realistically, there are more dangerous and worse crimes threatening the peace in society that needs immediate attention.

When the question of the illegality of homosexuality was put forth, 90% of the total number of respondents admitted that this never crossed their minds. Their admission that homosexual acts are usually performed in the privacy of their homes or other private places, was not in conscious or deliberate avoidance of the law. Rather, it is done instinctively, similar to heterosexual acts which seek privacy.

During the first few interviews, a respondent suggested that homosexuals who were involved in homosexual soliciting were more liable to be caught by the authorities. Following which, it was found that 50% of the respondents agreed that this probability

was higher but did not agree that this meant actual arrests and convictions occurred in our society.

Based on these respondents it is found that male homosexuals involvement with the law is close to zero where their sexuality is concerned.

#### 5.5 The Male Homosexual And His Sexual Life

At the outset it is not unfounded to assume that the question of the problems experienced by the male homosexuals in their sexual life have no bearing whatsoever to societal reaction towards homosexuality. By and large, this is true because generally people with similar sexual preferences will usually make advances in putting this idea across, and so idealistically we could separate our society into two, that is, the heterosexual community and the homosexual community. Fenced within the homosexual community, and relationship between two homosexuals would then remain within their segregated community.

Just as the need for secrecy is vital, a male homosexual cannot just seclude himself and remain at home. The need to fulfill his sexual desires then draws him to places where his sexuality is acknowledged by his very presence. Places referred to here would include gay bars, toilets and other public places. There are some male homosexuals who do wish their sexuality to be a known fact and this idea is put across by the use of earrings, scarfs etc.



The male homosexual respondents do experience a number of problems in their sexual life, like not being able to find sincere lovers among others.

However, a few respondents related the problem of " taking a fancy " or being attracted to people who are definitely " straight ". Here the respondents are confronted with a certain situation where they hope to win over the " straight " individuals at the risk at disclosing their sexuality. In all probability the " straight " individuals might be frightened off and they stand to lose. As in the case of the respondent who works in a factory, where the " straight " individual had only been a good friend to him. Unfortunately, he not only fell in love with the person but came to depend on him. As a result of this, the respondent took years to get over it and he also lost a good friend. In addition to that, the issue became public in the factory and the respondent became the target of much laughter and scorn.

While none of the respondents admitted to being victims, one respondent disclosed the fact that very often " straight " men make use or take advantage of the male homosexuals, to satisfy their sexual desires or simply for curiosity sake, when they themselves are not homosexuals. Although this may not be a problem if the male homosexuals consent to it but the very fact that they are treated as outlets of undesirable elements rather than human beings, is in itself a problem.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

Based on this research, it can be assumed that male homosexuals do face relational problems, with specific regard to their sexuality. However, when looking at the selected aspects for emphasis, that is, social, economical, political and sexual, such a generality would be extremely vague. This is because in some aspects the problems are not only big but complicated, while some exist with minimal complications and in the others, are non-existent. Due consideration needs to be given to a fact that is constantly taken for granted and that is, male homosexuals are equally unique individuals as the other members of society.

In the male homosexual respondents' relationship with their parents and families, it is found that the majority of them do have many complex and emotional problems with the exception of a few non-effeminated ones. These problems are also like some old, but unforgettable, nightmares for respondents whose sexuality have been revealed. While a single problem may be the experience of many respondents, their environment and situation varies so that it is found that their adaptation to it also differs. However, from the experience of these respondents, it can be said that problems are most frequent and complex in their relationship with their



families, especially their parents. While these are the people the respondents spend some very important years of their lives with, and whom they feel most for, it is in their relationship with them that the problems are multiplied. In the interviews on parents from the " members of the public ", it is found that parents claim to have a negative attitude towards homosexuality, to disapprove of it and, in general, are very prejudiced against homosexuality. However, I would like to suggest the retrospection of the source of such an attitude; would a mother reject her own son for an imagery wrong-doing he is not wholly responsible for ? And did this negative attitude really stem from within or has it been inculcated as a result from social pressure ? It is also found that parents are very often victims of misinformation about the facts of homosexuality, and in specific personalized situations parents especially mothers, are more acceptable and able to conform to certain measures.

In other relationship experienced by the respondents with their friends and acquaintances, it is found that the amount of their problems are relative to their environment. Those in closed-quarters like public schools experience problems in greater measure while it decreases when compared with those in universities and then those who are employed. For the respondents in schools, at least half of each day is spent within the confines of their schools. Not only are school-mates unavoidable at certain instances, classmates



are totally unavoidable altogether. As life is not so similarly confined for respondents in universities and those employed, these relationships are then avoidable and so are the problems accompanying it. Moreover, it is found that they are in better social and economical positions for more varied social lives. During the unavoidable moments, respondents in the universities would also have their share of problems there. However, outside of campus these problems are minimized as the friends then are purely by choice. As described earlier, the situation for those employed also varies. Based on results from the peer-group interviewed, and the information given by the male homosexual respondents, it is found that our young people, especially the females, are more able to adapt and then even accept the issue of homosexuality.

In the aspect of relationships where economics are concerned, it is found that students both in schools and universities have little or no problems at all with their teachers. While it was found earlier that basically teachers possessed a 100% negative attitude, this was altered when 60% of them said that they were positive they could adapt and accept, given time. This is probably because their relationship is strictly business and it was found that employers in certain fields, are more exposed and able to accept homosexuality. However, the situation is not so smooth for some respondents, especially the effeminated ones employed in factories



and other public services. They are more susceptible as compared to respondents in occupations expected of them by society. While problems exist with clientele, it is rather minimal.

In the male homosexual respondents' relationship with the law, it is found that problems hardly exist in our society at all. While it was found that most of the public wanted homosexuality to remain illegal and punishable, such crimes are not so easily caught or convicted. In addition to that it frequently involves willing actors and is carried out in the privacy of homes or unsuspecting places. While relational problems do exist for male homosexuals in this aspect, it does not for all the respondents interviewed.

All male homosexuals undoubtedly do have problems in their sexual relationships but as pointed out earlier, this sort of problems do not involve the society at large directly, but it is usually within the confines of their subculture. However, the problems arise and are extremely complicated when it involves "straight" individuals.

From the above, it can be said that the male homosexual respondents are forced to experience more problems in their relationships with both their families and people in general, all because their sexuality deviates from the accepted norm. It is found that the question of problems in relationships are much more frequent in their social relationships, though much less in their economic

and sexual relationships. It is also close to nil in the political aspect.

"Most homosexuals are never publicly labelled and that self-labelling is much more important" ( PLUMMER , 1975 : 202 ) I agree with this statement and it is this same self-labelling of these respondents which are responsible for many of their problems. However, it is absolutely necessary to trace the roots of this self-labelling because it is often a reciprocation of another initial reaction. In reference to my theoretical framework ( I.3 ), I stated that the labelling of male homosexuals as sexual deviants in our society attaches stigmatic effects to the respective deviants. The stigma is undeniably attached to all male homosexuals in our society, as can be seen in the analysis of the respondents who are " members of the public ". The same stigma then emits a form of hostility which is perceived by the deviant actors. The obvious effects of this leads to what is termed as self-labelling on the part of the male homosexuals. In other words, what was initially primary deviance has become secondary deviance as the respondents' reaction to their deviance. Coming back to an earlier question as to whether the problems encountered by the male homosexuals are actually a social product, I can only say that it is our society that decides whether to accept or reject something, to term it legal or illegal. If homosexuality is to become an accepted form of sexual experience, both legally and in every aspect of our lives, then the question of



the problems of male homosexuals would be fairly unnoticeable or something that is practically non-existent.

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